

Hood Canal Watershed Pledge

Robert Simmons, Emily Piper, WSU Mason County Extension

Keywords: Nutrients, Water Quality, Pledge Program, Watershed, Outreach

To reduce anthropogenic nutrient loading to Hood Canal, Washington State University Mason County Extension will be launching the "Hood Canal Watershed Pledge Program" in the spring and summer of 2005. This program is designed to help residents better understand Hood Canal's water quality issues and identify simple actions they can take to help alleviate them.

Development of the Pledge has included the following educational and social marketing principles: clear quantification of the problem, establishment of objectives, identification of the potential benefits and barriers for participants, then the design of an appealing, simple product that gives participants the tools and resources they need to adapt their behavior.¹

The "Hood Canal Watershed Pledge Program," based upon the successful "Whatcom Watersheds Pledge" program, will develop and distribute with extensive outreach efforts, a booklet that highlights interesting features of Hood Canal and how residents can help to maintain its splendor. It will ask residents to pledge to take specific steps at their home to reduce pollution, and will highlight community resources that can help them. To date the Whatcom County Watershed Pledge Program has over 600 residential participants and over 500 area businesses. The Whatcom Watershed Pledge serves as a very successful model for the Hood Canal Watershed Pledge Program. Surveys of behavior changes completed by the Whatcom Pledge program, demonstrated:

- Dramatic reduction in fertilizer and pesticide use
- Significant increase in recycling of motor oil and antifreeze
- Reduction of home car washing
- Improvement in pet waste management

The Hood Canal Watershed Pledge Program will provide education and resources to at least 1500 Hood Canal residents in 2005. The main strategy of the Watershed Pledge is to reach as many people as possible while still being effective. WSU Mason County and the Pledge program are committed to providing clear, consistent recommendations through the program as well as in accordance with other area agencies. The program will be evaluated by re-contacting the individuals who completed pledge forms and documenting the behavior changes they have made. From there, the program will be adjusted as necessary.

¹ Mohr-McKenzie, Douglas; Smith, William. *Fostering Sustainable Behavior: An Introduction to Community-Based Social Marketing*. New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island B.C. Canada. 1999.